THE MODERN DANCE.

BY REV. A. B. LEONARD.

IN this brief tract I do not propose to enter upon a discussion of the question of amusements in general, but to call attention to a single one, which is at once the most popular, and, in my judgment, the most harmful of all the amusements of the present day—namely, the modern dance.

That the dance is popular, not only among

those that are known as the world's people, but also with many that have assumed the Christian name, and are now connected with the different branches of the Church of Christ, is a fact, which is, alas! but too well known to us all: that it is the most harmful of all modern amusements, I most sincerely believe and shall now attempt to prove.

The dance is harmful to the body. The atmosphere of the ball-room is always unhealthful. How can it be otherwise, where the breaths of so many persons, often freighted with the odor of alcohol, and feted with incipient diseases, are commingled and inhaled by all. Then the physical energies are almost always overtaxed, so that for days the normal condition of the body is destroyed, and not unfrequently diseases that often prove fatal are superinduced. The violent and long-continued exercise of the dance is particularly harmful to young

ladies. It is a sad fact that a large number of young women enter the marriage relation utterly disqualified in a physical sense for that honorable and divinely ordained estate, on account of which they lead lives of unspeakable agony, and die when they should be in the full enjoyment of domestic bliss; and all because they become enamored with the excitement of the dance; and so for the sake of a few hours of sensuous pleasure, they sacrifice health, happiness, usefulness, and life itself. The grave holds to-day the earthly remains of many a fair and lovely woman who, but for the dance, would be in the full enjoyment of vigorous health, a blessing to the Church and the world. The dance promotes not only diseases that are peculiar to women, but such as are common to men as well. Many a young man has gone to a premature grave, while many more are treading hard upon its crumbling verge, because of the dissipations that have

been indulged while "tripping the light fantastic toe."

The dance is harmful to the mind. That the violent and long-continued exercise of the dance, causing a rapid flow of the blood through the body, is injurious to that delicate organ, the brain, will not be denied by any one who has given the subject careful consideration.

Besides, when young people become enamored with this species of amusement, they are likely to loose their taste for study, and all intellectual pursuits. Girls and boys of sixteen years are falling out of our public schools, 'ere they have passed the intermediate department, and are rushing into society, and indulging excessively in its excitements. Books and study are dry and dull to them and cannot be longer endured, and so intellectual development and discipline come to an end, and future usefulness in any considerable degree, is ren-

dered impossible. All educators, so far as I can learn, agree in their opinions as to the harmful effect of the dance, and kindred amusements, upon the intellectual culture of young people.

But most of all is the modern dance harmful to the *moral* and *religious* interests of society. I do not hesitate to affirm that the modern dance is *lasciviously immoral*, and responsible for the destruction of the virtue of thousands of the youth of our land. Every thing connected with the waltz is calculated to arouse and inflame animal passion. To show that this charge against the modern dance is sustained by more than my own declaration, I make the following quotations: A worthy clergyman has recently declared that the dance "consists substantially of a system of means contrived with more than human ingenuity to excite the instincts of sex to action, however subtle and disguised at the moment, in its sequel

the most bestial and degrading. . . . It is a usage that regularly titillates and tantalizes an animal appetite as insatiable as hunger, more cruel than revenge." Gail Hamilton, in a contribution to an Eastern journal has said: "The thing in its very nature is unclean and cannot be washed. The very *pose* of the parties suggest impurity."

The motions and movements of the round dance cannot be described without giving offense to true modesty, while the positions of the bodies of the dancers cannot but brush virtue's glow from the cheek of purity. To a young man who was passionately fond of dancing I once put the following question: "Did you ever swing a lady in the dance for one half hour without arousing a passion in your nature that you would have been ashamed to have been made known?" In the place of an answer he blushed and turned his back, thus admitting the fact that the question implied. When the round

dance has been indulged in for a half hour there has been accomplished in susceptible natures—and who are not susceptible?—all that lust could desire except an overt act of crime. Many a pure girl has been taken in the embrace of a lecherous villian, and swung in the dance until all her physical and moral energies have been relaxed, after which, in a secluded place, she has surrendered her person, virtue, and happiness to her destroyer.

But the evils of the modern dance do not stop with the ruin of unmarried women, but they go further, and separate, in not a few instances, husbands and wives, and turn Eden homes into perditions of wretchedness and sorrow. A writer has recently said: "The dancing hall is the nursery of the divorce court, the training ship of prostitution, the graduating school of infamy."

It is a fact that cannot be successfully denied that in what is known as fashionable

society, the dance occasions a large per centage of the divorce cases that occur, perhaps larger than any other one social influence.

Finally, the dance is ruinous to a religious life. After observing this social custom for many years from the stand-point of a pastor, I am prepared to say that in all cases that have come under my observation it has been ruinous to personal piety and usefulness. I have never known a person who pretended to enjoy even a moderate degree of personal religious prosperity, or who was even moderately useful as a Christian worker, who was even an infrequent dancer. I have rarely known a home in which there was a parlor used for dancing and at the same time an apartment in which there was erected a family altar. The dance has uniformly been, so far as my observation has extended, ruinous to personal piety, usefulness, and family religion.

But I must not attempt to pursue this

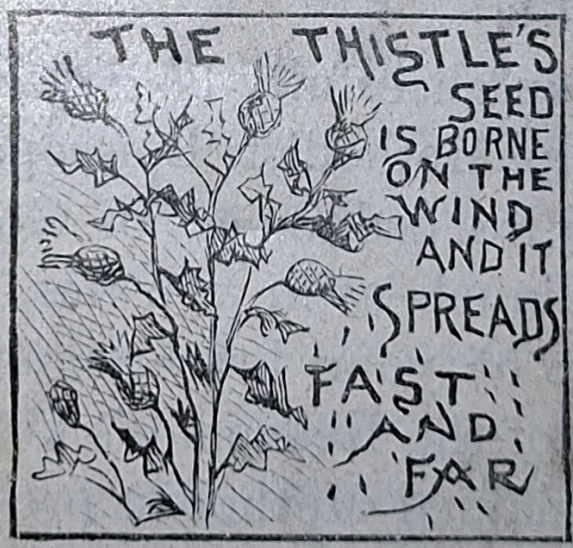
subject further now, but will ask, What shall we do, as pastors, to destroy this social custom, which is so manifestly a physical, intellectual, and moral evil—an evil that strikes at the very life of vital godliness.

Parlors and halls are thrown open, and the gay throngs are gathering, who, with nimble feet, are dancing their way to endless ruin. The dancing master bids for patronage, and classes are forming in which innocent children, encouraged by fond, but misguided parents, are being prepared to be slain beneath this juggernaut, whose wheels are already red with the blood of thousands of victims.

As clergymen shut out from the scenes of the dance, and not as careful, perhaps, as we should be to study its evil effects, we are not so fully awake, I sometimes fear, to the enormity of this evil as we should be. Religion dies out in the families connected with our Churches, and our young people

ing-parties, or patronizing dancing-schools," are declared to be offenses, which, if persisted in, shall be followed with expulsion from the Church.

Dancing Methodists *dance on the Discipline of their Church*, and Methodist preachers who do not enforce the Discipline against dancing members, *trample upon their ordination vows.*



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